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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - MIDDLE EAST - LEBANON

U.S. - EU RELATIONS

PARIS - TUESDAY, MARCH 01, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

MIDDLE EAST - LEBANON

U.S. - EU RELATIONS

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE ATTACK IN HILLA, WHICH LEFT 114 PEOPLE DEAD, IS A FRONT PAGE STORY ONLY IN COMMUNIST L'HUMANITE WHICH HEADLINES "BAGHDAD UNDER SHOCK" AND TITLES ITS INSIDE REPORT "MASSACRE ON A GRAND SCALE." THE STORY MAKES THE INSIDE PAGES ELSEWHERE WITH SIMILARLY GRIM HEADLINES: "THE MOST DEADLY ATTACK IN A YEAR" TITLES POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR, AN OPINION SHARED BY THIERRY OBERLE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO. "A DAY OF CARNAGE IN THE HEART OF HILLA" REPORTS LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION. DOMINIQUE THOMAS, A MIDDLE EAST EXPERT, IS INTERVIEWED IN FRANCE SOIR: "THIS IS A MESSAGE TO THE AMERICANS COVERED IN BLOOD. THIS ATTACK IS NO COINCIDENCE. DURING THE ELECTIONS, SECURITY WAS TOO TIGHT. NOW THE MESSAGE IS THAT STABILITY WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE UNLESS THE COALITION LEAVES IRAQ. BUT BY HITTING THE IRAQI FORCES, THE MESSAGE SAYS ALSO THAT THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT WILL NOT SURVIVE THE DEPARTURE OF THE AMERICANS."

TODAY'S NUMBER ONE FRONT-PAGE STORY IS LEBANON AND THE "WIND OF FREEDOM" (LE FIGARO) SWEEPING THE NATION. LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION HEADLINES "LEBANON'S PEACEFUL INTIFADA" WHILE FOR CATHOLIC LA CROIX "BEIRUT STANDS UP TO SYRIA." THE EDITORIAL IN LIBERATION SUGGESTS THAT "DEMOCRATIZATION IS ON THE MOVE AFTER IRAQ" AND LA CROIX COMMENTS ON THE "DOMINO EFFECT" WHICH IS PLAYING IN FAVOR OF DEMOCRACY AND AGAINST DICTATORSHIPS. (SEE PART C)

THE AFTERMATH OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S TRIP TO EUROPE CONTINUES TO ELICIT COMMENTARIES. IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER WEEKLY L'EXPRESS BERNARD GUETTA PENS AN UP-BEAT COMMENTARY TITLED "A TRUE REUNION" IN WHICH HE EMPHASIZES THAT "BOTH THE U.S. AND THE EU HAD A PRESSING INTEREST IN EASING THE TENSION." (SEE PART C) IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO PIERRE ROUSSELIN REPORTS ON THE CLUB DE MONACO, A MEETING BETWEEN FORMER INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATS, TITLED "TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION UNDER DURESS."

THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE IN LONDON IS ALSO REPORTED. IN LE FIGARO PATRICK SAINT-PAUL SUGGESTS IT MAY ACHIEVE "LIMITED GOALS CONSIDERING ISRAEL'S ABSENCE."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

MIDDLE EAST - LEBANON

"A WIND OF FREEDOM"

PATRICK SABATIER IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (03/01): "THERE IS A TEMPTATION TO SEE LEBANON'S PEACEFUL INTIFADA AS THE DOMINO EFFECT OF THE 'DEMOCRATIC CONTAGION' WHICH IS TRANSFORMING THE MIDDLE EAST. IS THIS WIND OF FREEDOM TRULY THE RESULT OF THE SHOCKWAVE INITIATED BY THE U.S. INTERVENTION IN IRAQ, AS PRESIDENT BUSH SAYS? U.S. DETERMINATION. IS ENCOURAGING NATIONAL OPPONENTS TO DICTATORSHIPS EVERYWHERE. DICTATORS ARE MORE HESITANT TO TURN TO REPRESSION. THE EUROPEANS WILL NOT OPPOSE THE AMERICANS WHEREVER DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS ARISE. THE FRENCH AND THE AMERICANS ARE WORKING HAND IN HAND IN LEBANON FOR SYRIA'S WITHDRAWAL."

"LEBANON'S VELVET REVOLUTION"

RENAUD GIRARD IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (03/01): "IN LEBANESE HISTORY YESTERDAY WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A MILESTONE OF LEBANON'S VELVET REVOLUTION. FREED FROM FEAR, THE PEOPLE IN THE STREETS AS WELL AS THE POLITICIANS DARED TO OPENLY OPPOSE LEBANON'S HOUNDED PRO-SYRIAN GOVERNMENT."
U.S. - EU RELATIONS

"A TRUE REUNION"

BERNARD GUETTA IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER WEEKLY L'EXPRESS (03/01): "LAST WEEK MANY HEADLINES REPORTED ON THE PROFOUND DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE U.S. THEY ARE INDEED

NUMEROUS, BUT THIS IS NOT THE ESSENTIAL POINT. WHAT COUNTS IS THAT IN SPITE OF KYOTO, OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT, OF THE LIFTING OF THE CHINESE ARMS EMBARGO, OR OF THE LACK OF U.S. SUPPORT TO PARIS, LONDON AND BERLIN'S EFFORTS WITH IRAN, AMERICA AND EUROPE HAD A PRESSING INTEREST IN LESSENING TRANSATLANTIC TENSION. WHAT MADE THIS A TRUE REUNION IS THAT IT WAS BASED ON REALITY. ON THE ONE HAND THE U.S. NEEDED TO FIND NEW FRIENDS BECAUSE AMERICA'S LACK OF POPULARITY HAS NEVER BEEN SO GREAT. AND NOT ONLY IN THE ARAB MUSLIM WORLD. THE U.S. NEEDED TO ENHANCE ITS IMAGE AND TO STRENGTHEN THE TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE. THIS IS WHY PRESIDENT BUSH COMMITTED TO THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS, THUS GIVING SATISFACTION TO THE EUROPEANS. THE EUROPEANS WERE JUST AS KEEN ABOUT THIS D ENTE. AS FOR CHIRAC, HE HAS MANAGED TO ACHIEVE FRANCE'S CONSECRATION: AFTER ALL PRESIDENT BUSH'S FIRST RECONCILIATION WAS WITH FRANCE, BEFORE HIS RECONCILIATION WITH EUROPE. CHIRAC IS THUS ACHIEVING HIS DREAM FOR FRANCE: TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS ON AN EQUAL BASIS, DEVOID OF MASTER-VASSAL TIES, WITH THE FREEDOM OF AGREEING, BUT NOT NECESSARILY ON EVERYTHING." LEACH